



From NWFP to KP

Era of Struggle, Identity, and
Governance in the Pakhtun
Homeland

Sohail Anjum

***From NWFP to KP:
Era of Struggle, Identity, and Governance in
the Pakhtun Homeland***

Sohail Anjum

This work is dedicated to
Allah Bakhsh Yusufi



***Founder of Journalism in NWFP,
Historian, Researcher,
Author, Freedom Fighter
My grandfather***



The author with his grandfather

List of Contents

#	Title	Page
1	Author's Foreword	6
2	The Prelude to a Province	10
3	Foundations of a Frontier Identity	15
4	From Awakening to Agitation	21
5	The Decade of Defiance – Peshawar Rises	27
6	Consolidation, Conflict, and the Call for Pakistan	33
7	The Road to Pakistan – Turmoil, Transition, and Triumph	39
8	Accession to Pakistan	46
9	The One Unit System and its Abolition	50
10	Saur Revolution and Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan.	56
11	The MMA Government in NWFP	63
12	Terrorism and Military Operations	70
13	Renaming NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	77
14	The Rise of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	84
14	The FATA–Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Merger	90
15	From NWFP to KP: A Tale Spanning Centuries	97



Author's Foreword

The history of nations is often woven from the threads of struggle, identity, and governance. For the people of the Pakhtun homeland—particularly those rooted in the rich and resilient soil of what was once the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—this weaving has produced a fabric of unmatched depth, complexity, and fortitude. This book, *From NWFP to KP: Era of Struggle, Identity, and Governance in the Pakhtun Homeland*, is an earnest tribute to that fabric.

The Origin: Peshawar and the Freedom Struggle

The book opens with the city of Peshawar, the cultural and political heart of the Pakhtun belt. For centuries, Peshawar has stood as a frontier not only of geography but of ideas, resistance, and reform. It was from this city that waves of intellectual thought and grassroots movements surged forth, contributing significantly to the larger anti-colonial movement in South Asia. In tracing the roots of political consciousness in this region, the early chapters pay homage to the unsung heroes, institutions, and mass mobilizations that shaped the freedom struggle. The personalities of Peshawar—revolutionaries, reformers, scholars, and poets—are remembered not as footnotes in a national saga, but as central characters in a drama of historic proportions.

The unique contributions of Peshawar to the Pakistan Movement are given due recognition. Unlike other regions, the people of this province were not only fighting British imperialism but also navigating an intense debate over their identity, representation, and future within the nascent idea of Pakistan. The sacrifices made—often at great personal and communal cost—reveal the profound depth of belief in the principles of justice, autonomy, and nationhood. These early chapters are not only about Peshawar's past; they are about reclaiming a rightful place in the national memory.

The Transition: From Colonial Frontier to Federated Province

The book then moves through the decisive moment of 1947, where the historic referendum and eventual accession of NWFP to Pakistan signaled a dramatic reorientation of political geography. However, accession was not the end—it was the beginning of another chapter marked by turbulence, contestation, and restructuring.

The newly formed state of Pakistan was faced with the challenge of integrating a frontier region that had, for decades, been administered differently under British colonial policy. For the Pakhtuns, this transition was not merely administrative; it was existential. How would their language, culture, and political aspirations be honored in the framework of a centralized state? Would autonomy be granted or denied? These questions, still relevant today, first emerged in those early years and were echoed throughout successive decades.

The Evolution: From NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The second half of the book takes a thematic and chronological journey through the province's transformation from 1947 to the 21st century. This transformation is not only symbolic, in the

change of name from NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also substantive in the way the people of the region have asserted their democratic agency, resisted marginalization, and demanded rightful inclusion in the federal scheme of Pakistan.

Chapters highlight key moments such as: the One Unit policy and the dissolution of provincial identity, the language and identity movements of the 1970s and beyond, the emergence of political leadership from within the province, the impact of global conflicts and Afghan wars on local security and society, and the constitutional recognition and renaming of the province in 2010.

Each chapter is more than a historical record—it is an invitation to understand the resilience of a people often portrayed through the lens of conflict alone. Here, governance failures and democratic awakenings are both studied with critical insight. Economic struggles, developmental gaps, and geopolitical pressures are placed alongside stories of political reform, cultural revival, and grassroots leadership.

A Voice from Peshawar

As the author of this work and a son of Peshawar, I undertook this project not simply as a scholar but as a witness to a story that belongs to my land and my people. The streets of Qissa Khwani Bazaar, the walls of Edwardes College, the sermons in mosques, the slogans of protest marches, the elections, the poetry, the bullets, the ballots—all have left imprints on the journey of this land and deserve to be documented with sincerity and depth. This book is a modest effort to tell that story, one that the mainstream has often overlooked or narrated with bias.

What This Book Offers

This book aims to

- Offer a consolidated historical and political narrative of NWFP/Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from the independence movement to the contemporary era;
- Correct the imbalances in national historiography that often marginalize Pakhtun contributions;
- Provide students, researchers, and policymakers with a grounded understanding of regional politics;
- And most importantly, inspire the youth of KP to know and cherish the struggles of their forebears.

In Conclusion

From NWFP to KP: Era of Struggle, Identity, and Governance in the Pakhtun Homeland is more than a collection of chapters. It is an integrated, living account of a land that has never stopped striving to be heard, seen, and valued. It honors those who fought for freedom, demanded dignity, and worked tirelessly to make the Pakhtun homeland a place of pride and progress within the broader tapestry of Pakistan.

Let this work serve as a bridge—between past and future, between memory and aspiration, and between silence and voice.

Sohail Anjum

Peshawar

July 2025

+92-334-924 9637 pishoree@gmail.com

Note:

1. *The words North-west Frontier Province (NWFP) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have been used intermittently and convey the same meaning.*
2. *Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen-AI) has been extensively used in generating the text*
3. *The words Pakhtun and Pashtun carry the same meaning*

The Prelude to a Province – (1849–1900)

The city of Peshawar, nestled at the edge of the Indian subcontinent and the gateway to Central Asia, has always occupied a strategic and symbolic role in South Asian history. Long before the creation of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in 1901, Peshawar stood as a vital node of power, resistance, and cross-cultural interaction. Between 1860 and 1900, this region experienced profound changes—politically, administratively, and socially—which laid the groundwork for its elevation to a separate province.

This chapter explores the key factors and developments in the late 19th century that led to the establishment of NWFP, with particular focus on the transformation of Peshawar during this era.

The Geopolitical Importance of Peshawar

From ancient times, Peshawar was a prized frontier city—ruled by Kushans, Ghaznavids, Mughals, Sikhs, and eventually the British. Its location near the Khyber Pass made it both a buffer and a gateway. For the British, especially in the latter half of the 19th century, Peshawar became a linchpin in the "*Great Game*" between the British and Russian empires, intensifying its strategic significance.

The British feared Russian expansion southward through Afghanistan and viewed Peshawar as their first line of defense. This geostrategic concern played a central role in the British decision to redefine their administrative approach to the frontier.

British Annexation & Early Administration

After defeating the Sikhs in the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848–49), the British annexed Punjab in 1849, and with it, Peshawar. Initially, the entire region, including present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was administered as part of Punjab. Peshawar became the divisional headquarters of the Frontier region.

However, the British soon realized that administering the tribal and frontier regions from Lahore was impractical due to:

- Vast cultural and linguistic differences,
- Harsh and resistant tribal terrain,
- Frequent uprisings and lawlessness,
- The failure of traditional Indian administrative tools in the region.

Challenges in Frontier Administration

Between the 1860s and 1890s, the British faced repeated tribal revolts and incursions along the frontier. The areas around Peshawar, including the Khyber Agency, Orakzai, Afridi and Mohmand territories, often erupted in violence. The British attempted various administrative experiments, such as:

- Establishing a *frontier police force* (precursor to the Frontier Constabulary),
- Building a chain of *forts and outposts* (like Fort Jamrud),
- Implementing a policy of *indirect rule* through tribal *Maliks* and local *Sardars*,
- Regular punitive expeditions to suppress dissent.

These measures created a climate of perpetual military governance, and Peshawar became both a command center and a contested space where colonial authority met tribal autonomy.

Rise of Militarization in Peshawar

The military nature of British control over Peshawar became more pronounced during this era. The city hosted large garrisons, cantonments, and intelligence networks. Its economy and infrastructure began catering to military needs:

- Roads and telegraph lines connected Peshawar to Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, and Rawalpindi.
- The *Punjab Northern Railway* was extended to Peshawar by 1883, reinforcing its connectivity to the Indian heartland.

However, this militarization came at the cost of civil administration and developmental focus. Peshawar became a frontier outpost rather than a thriving provincial city.

Cultural and Social Dynamics

Despite the martial atmosphere, Peshawar retained its cultural vibrancy. The city had diverse communities—Pashtuns, Hindko speakers, Hindus, Sikhs, and Afghan migrants. The Qissa Khwani Bazaar remained a hub of storytelling, trade, and political chatter.

By the late 19th century:

- Islamic seminaries gained prominence, producing scholars who would later lead reformist and anti-colonial movements.
- Sufi shrines like that of *Hazrat Rahman Baba* remained centers of spiritual and cultural life.
- A class of educated Muslims began to emerge, though in smaller numbers than in other parts of India, due to British neglect of formal education in the frontier.

Frontier Crimes Regulation, 1872 and 1887

Frustrated with the failure of traditional legal systems in controlling the tribal regions, the British introduced the *Frontier Crimes Regulation* (FCR), first in 1872 and revised in 1887. This draconian law allowed:

- Collective punishment,
- Detention without trial,
- Curtailment of appeal rights.

Though aimed at the tribal areas, FCR shaped the broader political environment of Peshawar, limiting legal recourse and fostering deep resentment among its people. It entrenched a colonial duality: civil governance in Punjab and arbitrary rule in the frontier.

Administrative Movements toward Separation

By the 1890s, it became clear that the frontier region, especially areas around Peshawar, required a different model of governance. Several factors prompted British policymakers to consider a new administrative unit:

- Ineffectiveness of Lahore-based control,
- Constant military unrest,
- Unique tribal dynamics requiring tailored policies,
- Pressure from local administrators like Sir Robert Sandeman and Sir Harold Deane, who advocated for direct and flexible Frontier administration.

In 1893, the *Durand Line Agreement* between British India and Afghanistan formalized the boundary of the Frontier region, further underscoring the need for a separate provincial identity.

Towards the Creation of NWFP

All these developments culminated in the British decision to carve out a new province from the western districts of Punjab. On 9 November 1901*, the *North-West Frontier Province* was officially created, comprising five Districts: Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Hazara, along with tribal Agencies under indirect rule.

Peshawar was chosen as the capital due to its

- Historical importance,
- Central location,
- Established military infrastructure, and
- Administrative experience as a divisional headquarters.

Conclusion

The formation of NWFP in 1901 was not a sudden administrative act but the result of decades of political experimentation, military engagement, and social transformation. At the heart of this evolution was Peshawar—witness to colonial anxieties, tribal negotiations, legal engineering, and emerging local consciousness.

As the new century dawned, Peshawar stood poised not just as a provincial capital but as a future epicenter of political awakening. The seeds of resistance, identity, and sacrifice that would define the Pakistan Movement were already quietly taking root among its people.

Foundations of a Frontier Identity (1901–1910)

The creation of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in 1901 marked a pivotal moment in the administrative and political history of British India. For the people of Peshawar, it symbolized both recognition and restraint—a separate identity, yet under tight imperial control. The decade that followed was foundational in shaping the political character of the province and, more importantly, in stirring the early currents of resistance, reform, and identity consciousness among its people.

This chapter explores the first ten years of NWFP's existence, focusing on how Peshawar responded to its new provincial status and how the seeds of political activism, later central to the Pakistan Movement, were sown.

The Establishment of NWFP as a Chief Commissioner Province

Upon its establishment in November 1901, NWFP was not granted full provincial autonomy. Instead, it was placed under a Chief Commissioner, reporting directly to the Viceroy. This made NWFP unique:

- It lacked a legislative council,
- Had no elected representation,
- All decisions rested with the British Executive authority.

Peshawar, as the new provincial capital, hosted the offices of the Chief Commissioner and other key Colonial departments, becoming the nerve center of governance.

The Colonial State in Peshawar

Peshawar now became a full-fledged administrative city, with significant expansion of colonial infrastructure:

- Construction of new civil lines, judicial complexes, and residences for British officers.
- Expansion of military cantonments to enforce peace along the tribal border.
- Continued investment in roads, railways, and communication lines to solidify control over the region.

Despite these developments, the province—especially Peshawar—remained governed with suspicion. The British still viewed its people through the lens of rebellion, tribalism, and unrest, shaping a harsh and controlling governance model.

Social Landscape and Educational Backwardness

One of the stark characteristics of NWFP in this decade was its educational and political backwardness, a condition partly imposed by the colonial policy of *deliberate neglect*.

- The British avoided promoting *modern education* among the Muslim majority, fearing it might incite political awakening.
- Very few schools existed in Peshawar beyond the basic level, and *Aligarh-style institutions* were absent.
- Higher education required migration to Punjab or Aligarh, limiting the emergence of a local intellectual class.

Still, mosques, madrasas, and Sufi centers continued to play an important role in community education and religious guidance.

Cultural Awakening and the Role of Print

Although formal education was limited, the early 1900s witnessed the slow emergence of print culture in Peshawar:

- Religious tracts, reformist literature, and limited Urdu journals began to circulate.
- Discussions on Muslim identity, unity, and decline were increasingly influenced by the reformist ideas of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Maulana Shibli Nomani.

This period also saw the beginning of *literary gatherings*, where Peshawaries debated social, religious, and cultural issues—laying a foundation for later political consciousness.

The Frontier and the Muslim Identity Question

The partition of Bengal in 1905 and the subsequent formation of the *All India Muslim League* in 1906 had ripples even in the remote corners of British India. Though NWFP was not an active participant at this stage, the events catalyzed:

- A growing interest in Muslim political identity.
- Quiet admiration for the Muslim League's aims among the educated elite in Peshawar.
- An emerging awareness of the need for *Muslim political representation* in British institutions.

The Muslim League's early goal of protecting Muslim interests resonated in a region that felt marginalized both by the British and the Hindu-majority Congress leadership.

The Absence of Representative Government

Unlike Punjab or Bengal, NWFP had no council elections, no legal political parties, and no press freedom. This repression delayed political activism but also created a simmering sense of exclusion, particularly among the younger generation.

Peshawar's educated youth, though few in number, increasingly sought political forums outside the province:

- Some migrated to Punjab for education and exposure to new political ideas.
- Others joined religious seminaries and later returned with reformist zeal.

This growing *external exposure* played a key role in later mobilizations.

Interactions with Tribal Areas and Afghanistan

Peshawar's position on the Afghan frontier meant that the city was frequently involved in cross-border diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and military oversight. This decade witnessed:

- Continued tension with the Afridi, Mohmand, and Wazir tribes.
- British efforts to keep a tight grip on the *Khyber Agency* through tribal alliances and subsidies.

These interactions kept Peshawar in a perpetual state of alert and militarization, influencing its economy, demography, and civic priorities.

Early Seeds of Resistance

Though organized political resistance had not yet taken form, this decade saw the rise of *religious reform movements*, particularly:

- *Deobandi* influence spreading through local *Ulema* who began advocating for Islamic reform and anti-colonial ideas.
- Quiet influence of pan-Islamism, particularly after the Russo-Japanese War (1905), which stirred admiration for Asian resistance to European powers.

Peshawar's mosque pulpits and madrasa circles began echoing calls for Muslim awakening, laying the groundwork for future mass mobilization.

The Plight of the Common People

For the average Peshawarite, the early 1900s were marked by:

- High taxation,
- Police and military oppression,
- Legal inequality under the *Frontier Crimes Regulation*,
- Lack of representation or participation in governance.

These conditions fostered frustration and a growing realization that their voices would only be heard through collective political struggle.

Conclusion

The first decade of NWFP's existence was one of political stagnation but cultural preparation. Peshawar, though tightly controlled, began to experience a slow awakening—

intellectually, spiritually, and nationally. While the British tried to keep the region isolated from the political currents sweeping through the rest of India, they could not stop the undercurrents of change stirring in the hearts of Peshawaries.

As the next decade approached, these undercurrents would grow into the early tides of organized resistance, setting the stage for the province's remarkable role in the Pakistan Movement.

From Awakening to Agitation (1911–1920)

The decade between 1911 and 1920 was a period of profound transformation across the subcontinent, and Peshawar was no exception. While the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) remained under the administrative shadow of British control, the larger Islamic world was in turmoil. The Balkan Wars, the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, and World War I stirred the emotions and loyalties of Muslims across India—including those in the Frontier.

In Peshawar, the British policy of political suppression began to fray as religious scholars, reformists, and a new generation of socially conscious youth started challenging colonial authority. This chapter traces the emergence of these early movements, especially the *Khilafat Movement*, and the growing political awareness that set the stage for mass resistance in the coming decades.

Global Events, Local Echoes

The beginning of the decade was shaped by two major international developments:

- The *Tripolitan War* (1911) and *Balkan Wars* (1912–13) shook Muslim morale across the world.
- The *First World War* (1914–1918) further eroded the position of the Ottoman Empire, which was seen by many Indian Muslims as the last bastion of Islamic power.

In Peshawar, these events were deeply felt. Friday sermons in mosques lamented the plight of fellow Muslims, while the city's

religious circles intensified calls for unity, revival, and resistance against colonial domination.

The Rise of Reformist Islam

The influence of the *Deobandi Ulema*, already present in the previous decade, became stronger in this period. Many young men from NWFP, including Peshawar, began traveling to *Darul Uloom Deoband* and returning as committed reformers.

These religious scholars:

- Preached against British imperialism,
- Encouraged the rejection of western cultural values,
- Advocated for Islamic education and self-reliance.

Figures like *Maulana Abdur Rahim Popalzai* of Peshawar emerged as key religious voices, encouraging not just spiritual but also political awakening.

The Impact of the Silk Letter Movement (1913–16)

One of the most significant yet lesser-known episodes of this era was the *Silk Letter Movement* (Reshmi Rumal Tehrik), led by Deobandi scholars who conspired to seek Afghan and Turkish help to overthrow British rule.

Peshawar, being close to Afghanistan and a center of Deobandi activity, became a critical link in this underground network. British intelligence became increasingly suspicious of activities in madrasas and mosques in and around the city.

Although the movement was suppressed, and several clerics were arrested, it left a lasting impression on the political

consciousness of Peshawaries and made the British wary of religious networks in the region.

War and Its Discontents

World War I had a dual impact on Peshawar:

- Hundreds of Pashtuns were recruited into the *British Indian Army*, from a few districts of NWFP.
- At the same time, resentment grew due to high taxes, forced recruitment, and rising food prices.

While the British praised the “*martial races*” of the Frontier, the common people saw little improvement in their lives. Post-war disillusionment became widespread, especially among returning soldiers and their families.

The Khilafat Movement Reaches Peshawar

The *Khilafat Movement*, launched in 1919 to protest the dismantling of the Ottoman Caliphate, found strong resonance in NWFP, particularly in Peshawar.

Key features of the Khilafat Movement in Peshawar:

- Mosques became hubs of political mobilization and religious sermons took on a more political tone.
- Khilafat committees were formed in Peshawar to organize meetings, protests, and fund collections.
- Ulema such as Maulana Fazal Wahid (popularly known as Haji Sahib of Turangzai) became leading voices in linking religious concerns with political activism.

The emotional appeal of the Khilafat cause unified various classes—religious scholars, traders, farmers, and students—around a common political objective for the first time.

Rowlatt Act and the Beginnings of Civil Disobedience

The Rowlatt Act of 1919 (named after Sir Sidney Rowlatt), which allowed imprisonment without trial, caused outrage across India, and even in politically repressed NWFP, voices of dissent grew louder.

Though formal protests were rare due to the strict laws of the province, secret meetings, anti-British poetry, and underground pamphlets started circulating in Peshawar. The fear of retribution under the *Frontier Crimes Regulation* prevented open defiance, but the mood of the city had changed.

The Emergence of Young Reformers

The decade also saw the emergence of a new generation of *educated Peshawaries*, many of whom were exposed to political ideas while studying in Punjab, Delhi, or Aligarh.

Some key developments:

- Student discussion groups began in madrassas and informal gatherings.
- Awareness of the *All India Muslim League* and the *Indian National Congress* spread slowly through Urdu newspapers like *Sarhad* of *Allah Bakhsh Yusufi* and returning students.
- Debates on self-rule, autonomy, and Muslim unity became more frequent in private circles.

Though the British tightly controlled the press and assembly in NWFP, *intellectual resistance* had begun to take root.

Haji Sahib of Turangzai: A Symbol of Resistance

One of the most influential figures of this decade was *Haji Sahib of Turangzai*, a former ally of the British turned freedom fighter. After supporting education and reform in earlier years, he grew disillusioned with colonial rule and eventually took refuge in the tribal areas.

From there, he:

- Organized raids against British outposts,
- Encouraged tribal resistance,
- Became a folk hero and symbol of defiance for the people of Peshawar.

Though never fully integrated into the mainstream nationalist movement, Haji Sahib's actions inspired many in the city and served as a precursor to the mass resistance that would follow.

Peshawar's Political Isolation and Growing Frustration

Despite the growing national agitation, Peshawar remained politically *isolated* due to:

- The absence of representative government,
- Strict enforcement of the FCR,
- Lack of newspapers and public platforms.

This isolation, however, did not prevent the *build-up of frustration*. By 1920, the people of Peshawar had begun to feel a

deep disconnect from the colonial state—and an emerging unity with the broader Muslim and Indian political awakening.

Conclusion

The decade from 1911 to 1920 marked the *transition from religious reform to political agitation* in Peshawar. Though formal political organization was still largely absent, the emotional mobilization around the Khilafat issue, combined with post-war disillusionment and growing religious activism, stirred the first real collective consciousness among Peshawaries.

The city was now ready to move beyond sermons and symbolism—and into the streets. The next decade would witness Peshawar rise as one of the *Frontline cities* in the struggle for freedom, sacrifice, and nationhood.

The Decade of Defiance – Peshawar Rises (1921–1930)

The 1920s were a defining decade in the political history of Peshawar and the wider NWFP. The simmering discontent of the previous two decades erupted into open resistance, led by a new generation of politically conscious Peshawaries. This era witnessed the province's first organized mass movement against British rule, culminating in the *Qissa Khwani Bazaar Massacre of 1930*, one of the bloodiest events of the Indian independence struggle. This incident has been very aptly reported and commented upon by *Allah Bakhsh Yusufi* in his famous book *The Frontier Tragedy*.

This chapter explores the factors that led to this political awakening, the role of the *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement* of *Abdul Ghaffar Khan* aka Bacha Khan, and how Peshawar emerged as a bold, defiant symbol of nonviolent resistance in British India.

The Aftermath of Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movements

By 1921, both the *Khilafat Movement* and Gandhi's *Non-Cooperation Movement* were in full swing across India. While NWFP's participation had been limited due to its political restrictions, the emotional impact of these movements resonated strongly in Peshawar.

Key developments:

- More Ulema and religious leaders in Peshawar began delivering politically charged sermons.

- An increasing number of Peshawaries viewed British rule as illegitimate and morally corrupt.
- The failure of *constitutional reforms* (Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms) to address NWFP's exclusion added to the frustration.

Formation of the Khilafat Committees and Nationalist Networks

The early 1920s saw the formal emergence of Khilafat Committees in Peshawar and surrounding towns. These acted as early political networks, organizing:

- Fund collection drives,
- Public awareness meetings (often held in mosques),
- Support for imprisoned national leaders.

Though these committees faded after the collapse of the Khilafat Movement in 1924, they laid the organizational groundwork for future political efforts in the region.

Frontier's Exclusion from Reforms

One of the greatest grievances of the people of NWFP in this decade was their *exclusion* from the *Government of India Act 1919*, which had introduced limited representative governance to provinces like Punjab and Bengal.

NWFP remained a *Chief Commissioner Province* with no legislative assembly, elected representatives, or legal political parties.

This marginalization created a deep political vacuum—one that would soon be filled by indigenous leaders like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his followers.

The Rise of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan)

Perhaps the most transformative figure of the decade was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, affectionately known as Bacha Khan. A towering moral and political figure from Utmanzai in Charsadda, Bacha Khan began his journey not as a politician but as a social reformer.

His early initiatives included:

- *Azad Schools*: Focused on Pashto-language education, moral reform, and self-respect.
- Promotion of *Pashtun identity* rooted in peace, service, and discipline.
- Advocacy of nonviolence (*Ahinsa*)—a radical idea for a people long stereotyped as *warlike*.

Bacha Khan's message resonated in Peshawar, especially among the youth, the poor, and the marginalized.

Birth of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement

By 1929, Bacha Khan formally organized his growing network into the Khudai Khidmatgar (*Servants of God*) Movement. Dressed in distinctive red uniforms, this nonviolent volunteer corps pledged to:

- Serve humanity without greed or fear,
- Promote education and reform,
- Resist British colonialism through nonviolence.

The movement spread rapidly in Peshawar. The city became a *nerve center* for training camps, volunteer enrollment, and organizing peaceful protests.

The Qissa Khwani Bazar Massacre (April 23, 1930)

The most defining—and tragic—event of the decade occurred in Qissa Khwani Bazaar, the heart of Peshawar.

On April 23, 1930, as part of the nationwide protests following the arrest of Congress leaders and the enforcement of *Section 144*, peaceful demonstrators in Peshawar took to the streets.

What followed was brutal:

- British Indian Army opened fire on *unarmed protesters*, many of them Khudai Khidmatgars.
- Eyewitness accounts claimed over *200 people* were killed, though official figures were much lower.
- Troops reportedly refused orders to shoot, prompting the British to deploy non-Pathan regiments. Prominent among the regiments that refused to fire on protestants was Gharwali Rifles.

This massacre:

- Shocked the entire subcontinent,
- Brought Peshawar into the national consciousness,
- Cemented its place as a symbol of *sacrifice* and moral courage.

Reaction and Repression

In the wake of the massacre, the British administration cracked down hard:

- Martial law-like conditions were imposed in Peshawar.
- Hundreds of Khudai Khidmatgars were jailed or tortured.
- Bacha Khan was arrested, and his schools were shut down.
- The press was censored, and public gatherings banned.

Yet, instead of breaking the spirit of the people, these measures further *strengthened* their resolve.

Strengthening ties with Indian National Congress

After the Qissa Khwani tragedy, the Indian National Congress took notice of Peshawar and fully endorsed the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement.

Gandhi, Nehru, and others hailed the nonviolent resistance of the Peshawaries as exemplary. In return:

- Congress expanded its support into NWFP,
- Bacha Khan joined Congress formally,
- Congress leaders began visiting Peshawar, bridging the political isolation of the region.

This alliance would dominate the region's politics for the next two decades.

Women and Youth Join the Movement

One of the remarkable aspects of the late 1920s was the involvement of women and students in the freedom struggle.

- Peshawar's women, especially from traditional households, began participating in processions, collecting donations, and providing food and shelter to activists.

- Student activism increased, with secret study circles and nationalist poetry spreading among youth.

This widening of the movement's base made it harder for the British to isolate or silence the resistance.

Conclusion

The 1920s transformed Peshawar from a politically repressed provincial capital into a beacon of *nonviolent resistance*. The decade ended with blood, but also with pride—with Peshawar standing tall as one of the few places in India where unarmed civilians faced colonial bullets with unwavering resolve.

This was the decade that gave birth to a political identity in Peshawar rooted in *sacrifice*, *service*, and *steadfastness*—qualities that would define its role in the Pakistan Movement in the decades to follow.

Consolidation, Conflict, and the Call for Pakistan (1931–1940)

The 1930s were a decisive decade in the subcontinent's freedom struggle—and for Peshawar, a time of intense political engagement. Following the Qissa Khwani Bazaar Massacre of 1930, the spirit of resistance in Peshawar did not wane; it deepened, matured, and organized. The Khudai Khidmatgar Movement reached its zenith, Congress gained a political stronghold in the Frontier, and ideological debates over Indian nationalism versus Muslim separatism began to shape public discourse in Peshawar's streets, mosques, and schools.

This chapter examines the decade in which Peshawar became a politically conscious, ideologically vibrant, and electorally active city—torn between competing visions of India's future.

Aftermath of Qissa Khwani: Suppression and Resilience

Following the brutal repression of 1930, the British government intensified its crackdown:

- Thousands of Khudai Khidmatgar workers and sympathizers were imprisoned.
- Bacha Khan remained in and out of jail throughout the early 1930s.
- Educational institutions and press outlets sympathetic to the movement were harassed or shut down.

Yet, far from weakening, the movement gained moral strength. In Peshawar, volunteer cells went underground but continued

organizing secretly in neighborhoods, Hujras, and madrasas. The *Red Shirts* had become a symbol of *defiance and dignity*.

The Government of India Act 1935 and Electoral Politics

A significant political development of this decade was the enactment of the *Government of India Act 1935*, which:

- Granted NWFP the status of a full *Governor's Province*,
- Allowed limited provincial *self-government*,
- Introduced *elected* legislative assemblies.

For the first time, people in NWFP—including Peshawar—would have the opportunity to vote for their own representatives. This development electrified the political atmosphere.

1937 Elections: Congress Victory in NWFP

The first provincial elections were held in February 1937. In NWFP:

- The *Indian National Congress*, in alliance with the Khudai Khidmatgars, won a majority,
- Dr. Abdul Jabbar Khan, popularly known as Dr. Khan Sahib, the elder brother of Bacha Khan, became Chief Minister of NWFP,
- Peshawar's constituencies voted overwhelmingly for the Congress-Khudai Khidmatgar alliance.

This victory was a watershed moment:

- It brought local, indigenous leadership into power for the first time,

- Peshawar became a hub of progressive legislation, educational reform, and civil rights advocacy,
- Political engagement among common people surged, with more youth, traders, and even women entering political circles.

The Muslim League's Weak Position in NWFP

During this period, the *All India Muslim League* remained relatively weak in NWFP. Its leaders were mostly urban, conservative, and disconnected from the rural, tribal, and reformist masses aligned with the Khudai Khidmatgars.

In Peshawar:

- Muslim League struggled to find a support base, often seen as elitist and lacking social service credentials.
- Many religious scholars and moderate Muslims viewed the League with skepticism, believing its Muslim identity was *culturally different* from that of Frontier Muslims.
- The Congress-Khudai Khidmatgar alliance continued to dominate political and civic space.

However, this scenario would begin to shift near the end of the decade.

Social Reforms and Civic Transformation under Dr. Khan Sahib

With the Congress-led government in power, Peshawar witnessed a wave of *social reforms*:

- New schools were opened, including for girls—an unprecedented move.
- Roads, hospitals, and civic infrastructure were developed.

- Corrupt and harsh practices under the *Frontier Crimes Regulation* were challenged and partially reformed.

Bacha Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib prioritized:

- Promoting Pashto language and literature,
- Encouraging inter-communal harmony,
- Reducing the power of oppressive landlords and pro-British tribal intermediaries.

This created a *progressive image* of governance that resonated with many urban and rural Peshawaries.

Rising Tensions with the British Raj

Despite being a constitutional government, the Congress-led setup in NWFP continued to face hostility from the British establishment:

- British officers distrusted the Khudai Khidmatgars due to their past opposition.
- Administrative delays and central interference frequently disrupted provincial initiatives.
- British military presence remained strong in Peshawar, keeping a close watch on political activities.
- The relationship between civilian authority and colonial bureaucracy was tense and uncooperative.

The Lahore Resolution and its Echoes in Peshawar (1940)

In March 1940, the All India Muslim League passed the *Lahore Resolution*, calling for "*independent states*" for Muslims of the

subcontinent. Though its language was initially vague, it was the first formal step toward the idea of *Pakistan*.

In Peshawar, the reaction was *mixed*:

- The Khudai Khidmatgar leadership rejected the resolution, maintaining their commitment to a *united, democratic India*.
- Some sections of the Muslim middle class, particularly traders, students, and professionals, began *sympathizing* with the League's vision, especially in reaction to perceived Congress dominance.
- Urdu newspapers from Punjab carrying Jinnah's speeches began circulating in Peshawar, gradually shifting public opinion.

This marked the emergence of *ideological polarization* within the city.

Cultural Awakening and Political Expression

The late 1930s saw a cultural flowering in Peshawar:

- Poetry and drama with political themes became popular.
- The local press gained readership, though still under tight scrutiny.
- Young poets like Ghani Khan used verse to critique both colonialism and conservative traditionalism.

Literary clubs and political discussion groups became more active, turning Peshawar's educated youth into a significant force in the coming struggle.

Seeds of Political Division

By the end of the decade, Peshawar had become politically divided:

- The Congress-Khudai Khidmatgar alliance still commanded loyalty among reformists, Ulema, and the rural masses.
- The Muslim League, though weak in organization, began gaining ideological traction among those inclined toward *Muslim separatism*.

This division would shape the fierce political contests of the next decade, with each side vying for the soul of Peshawar and the future of the Frontier.

Conclusion

The 1930s were the decade of *consolidation* and *conflict*. Peshawar had moved from protest to governance, from martyrdom to reform. But even as the city enjoyed a brief period of progressive rule and cultural awakening, dark clouds of political division loomed on the horizon.

The *question of Pakistan*—still vague in 1940—was beginning to penetrate the political consciousness of Peshawaries. The next decade would see that question erupt into action, agitation, and decisive choices.

The Road to Pakistan – Turmoil, Transition, and Triumph (1941–1950)

The period from 1941 to 1950 stands as the most defining in the history of the Indian subcontinent—and especially for Peshawar and the people of the North-West Frontier Province. This was the era in which the *idea* of Pakistan evolved into a *movement*, leading to independence in 1947. For Peshawar, it was a period of political *polarization*, popular *mobilization*, and eventually, painful *transformation*.

While the rest of India moved steadily toward Partition, NWFP became one of the most contested political arenas—caught between the Indian National Congress–Khudai Khidmatgar alliance and the rising tide of the All India Muslim League. The decade would test loyalties, shake families, and ultimately bring Peshawar into the fold of a new Muslim homeland—*Pakistan*.

World War II: Shift in Political Winds (1941–1945)

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 caused a rupture between the Indian National Congress and the British Raj. The Congress ministries, including in NWFP under Dr. Khan Sahib, resigned in protest when the British declared India's entry into the war without consulting Indian leaders

This created a *political vacuum*:

- NWFP was placed under *Governor's Rule* once again.
- The Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, already under colonial suspicion, now faced increased repression.

- The Muslim League, which had stayed away from electoral politics in NWFP earlier, began organizing actively to fill the void.

In Peshawar, this marked the beginning of a shift in public discourse—from Congress's ideals of Indian unity to the League's growing calls for a separate Muslim nation.

The Muslim League's Entry into NWFP

Between 1942 and 1946, the All India Muslim League, under Muhammad Ali Jinnah, launched a concerted campaign to gain a foothold in NWFP.

Their strategy included:

- Establishing League branches in Peshawar and other districts.
- Mobilizing students, traders, and religious leaders in favor of Pakistan.
- Promoting the vision of a *Muslim identity* distinct from the Congress's inclusive nationalism.

Peshawar became the focal point of this ideological contest. The city's urban middle class, particularly young professionals and bazaar merchants began leaning toward the League.

The 1945–46 Elections: A Political Turning Point

The 1946 provincial elections were a critical test of popularity:

- In NWFP, the Congress–Khudai Khidmatgar alliance won the majority once again.
- Dr. Khan Sahib returned as Chief Minister.

- However, the Muslim League's performance improved significantly, particularly in urban Peshawar.

This election revealed two critical realities:

- The rural Pashtun majority still stood by Bacha Khan and Congress.
- But the Pakistan sentiment was gaining serious ground, especially among the youth and urban classes.

It was now clear that the idea of Pakistan had arrived in Peshawar, and was here to stay.

Mounting Tensions and Communal Divide

From 1946 onward, communal tensions escalated across India. Though NWFP remained relatively free of Hindu-Muslim riots, the *ideological divide* in Peshawar widened:

- Muslim League supporters accused Congress leaders of betraying Muslim interests.
- Khudai Khidmatgars and Bacha Khan continued to insist that Partition would divide Indian Muslims and weaken their collective future.
- Families, friends, and neighborhoods in Peshawar split along political lines.

Religious gatherings, student organizations, even weddings and funerals became arenas of *debate and division*.

The 1947 Referendum in NWFP

As part of the Partition Plan, also called June 1947 Plan, Lord Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy, proposed a plan for the

partition of India. Provinces would join either India or Pakistan based on the majority will of their population, determined through legislative assembly votes or referenda.

In the case of NWFP, the Congress government demanded an option for an independent Pukhtunistan, a sovereign Pashtun state, citing the unique ethnic and political history of the province. However, the British and the Muslim League rejected this demand, stating that only two options—India or Pakistan—would be on the ballot.

Conduct of the Referendum (July 6–17, 1947)

The referendum was held between 6th and 17th July 1947 in the settled districts of NWFP. The tribal areas were excluded. The ballot paper offered only two choices:

- Accede to Pakistan
- Accede to India

In protest of the exclusion of the Third option, the Indian National Congress and Khudai Khidmatgars boycotted the referendum. Ghaffar Khan famously said: “*You have thrown us to the wolves.*”

Despite this boycott, the referendum went ahead under British administration. The Muslim League campaigned vigorously, framing the referendum as a religious obligation and a moment of destiny for Muslims.

Results of the Referendum

Out of 572,798 eligible voters, 292,118 cast their votes (about 51% turnout). Of these:

- 289,244 (99%) voted for Pakistan
- Only 2,874 voted for India

Though the voter turnout was modest, the result was clear. On 20th July 1947, the British government formally announced that NWFP would join Pakistan.

Aftermath and Repercussions

Dissolution of Congress Government:

Following the result, the Congress-led provincial government of Dr. Khan Sahib was dismissed by Governor Sir George Cunningham. A new government led by Muslim League's Abdul Qayyum Khan was formed. The administrative, political, and ideological transformation of the province began immediately.

Bacha Khan's Statement and Subsequent Years:

In the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan took the oath of allegiance, but he remained critical of authoritarianism, centralization, and lack of provincial autonomy. He would spend many years in prison under successive governments and remain a voice for non-violence and Pashtun identity.

Significance of the Referendum

1. Legitimized NWFP's Accession to Pakistan:

Despite the controversy and boycott, the referendum provided a legal and political basis for NWFP's inclusion in Pakistan.

2. Shaped Provincial Politics:

It ended decades of Congress dominance and ushered in the era of Muslim League rule, with long-term effects on provincial administration and ideology.

3. Deepened Ethnic and Political Divides:

The exclusion of the Pukhtunistan option and the marginalization of the Khudai Khidmatgars left a legacy of mistrust between the state and Pashtun nationalists that would re-emerge in later decades.

4. Created a Strategic Frontier Province:

With NWFP now part of Pakistan, the country acquired a critical geopolitical frontier with Afghanistan, influencing decades of foreign policy and security dynamics.

August 14, 1947: Independence and a New Identity

On 14 August 1947, Pakistan came into being. In Peshawar:

- Celebrations were held across the city, especially by Muslim League supporters.
- The city's Qissa Khwani Bazaar, once the site of massacre, echoed with chants of "*Pakistan Zindabad*."
- Flags were raised over government buildings, and many young activists saw their dreams realized.

But the day also came with *uncertainty* and *silence* for many in the Khudai Khidmatgar fold:

- Bacha Khan famously called Pakistan "*not our country*" in despair.
- The Khudai Khidmatgars pledged peaceful *cooperation*, but were quickly *sidelined* by the new regime.

Conclusion

The decade of 1941–1950 was the most intense, dramatic, and fateful period in Peshawar’s modern history. From war to referendum, from hope to heartbreak, the people of Peshawar saw their city evolve from a battlefield of ideas to a province of a new nation.

For some, it was the fulfillment of a sacred dream; for others, the loss of a pluralistic ideal. Yet for all, this was the decade that defined who they were—and what they would become in the new story of Pakistan.

Accession to Pakistan

The year 1947 was a watershed moment in the history of the Indian subcontinent. As British colonial rule neared its end, the princely states and provinces of British India faced momentous choices. While most provinces had clear ethnic, religious, and political majorities that influenced their accession to either India or Pakistan, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) presented a unique case. Despite being a Muslim-majority region, its political leadership—dominated by the Indian National Congress and led by the redoubtable Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan—opposed the creation of Pakistan. This set the stage for a historic and deeply contentious referendum in July 1947, the outcome of which would decide NWFP's future.

Historical Background

The Frontier Province under British Rule:

The NWFP was carved out in 1901 from the Punjab Province and comprised several settled districts and tribal areas. The region had always been of strategic interest to the British due to its proximity to Afghanistan and Central Asia. It remained a militarized frontier, with semi-autonomous tribal areas and a conservative tribal population.

Rise of Pashtun Nationalism and the Khilafat Movement:

The Pashtun nationalist movement found its roots in the Khilafat Movement (1919–1924) and the anti-colonial struggle. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan—later known as the Frontier Gandhi—emerged as the leader of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement. His followers promoted non-violence, education, and social reform. Politically aligned with the Indian National Congress, Ghaffar Khan and his allies saw

themselves as part of a broader Indian independence struggle rather than a communal or sectarian project.

The Political Climate before Partition

Congress vs. Muslim League in NWFP:

Unlike other Muslim-majority provinces, the Muslim League struggled to gain a foothold in NWFP. In the 1937 and 1946 provincial elections, the Indian National Congress secured a majority and formed the government, with Dr. Khan Sahib (elder brother of Ghaffar Khan) as the Chief Minister. The Muslim League, under Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, considered NWFP's loyalty to the Congress a direct challenge to the two-nation theory.

Muslim League's Mobilization:

In the months leading to the partition, the Muslim League accelerated its campaign in NWFP. Through public rallies, religious appeals, and calls for Muslim unity, the League attempted to break Congress dominance. The region's ulema and Islamic scholars also supported the idea of Pakistan, creating a religious-nationalist coalition that contrasted with the secular and pluralist Congress-Pashtun leadership.

The Repercussion of the Referendum

As discussed in the previous chapter, a *referendum* was held in July 1947, asking NWFP's people to choose between joining Pakistan, or joining India.

The Congress and Khudai Khidmatgar boycotted the referendum, calling it *undemocratic and one-sided*. Despite the boycott the referendum witnessed about 50% of eligible voters but of those who voted, over 99% chose Pakistan.

The referendum sowed the seeds of an ideological divide between the Congress–Khudai Khidmatgar alliance and the pro–Muslim League mindset—a divide that would persist on the political horizon of NWFP for many years to come."

Suppression of Khudai Khidmatgars in Independent Pakistan

The Muslim League government viewed the Khudai Khidmatgars and their Congress allies as hostile to the state. Many activists were arrested, and their offices and schools were shut down. The Bacha Khan movement was severely weakened through administrative and legal pressure.

The post-independence state viewed the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement with deep *suspicion*:

- The new Muslim League government in NWFP arrested Bacha Khan, Dr. Khan Sahib, and many senior leaders.
- The Khudai Khidmatgar Movement was *banned*.
- Azad schools were closed, and activists were harassed.

Peshawar, which had once led nonviolent resistance against the British, now found its own nationalist heroes persecuted by a government they had helped bring into being.

The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan and Rising Instability (1951)

The assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 cast a long shadow over the closing years of this chapter:

- Political uncertainty increased,

- Civil-military bureaucracy grew stronger,
- Regional grievances in NWFP, particularly in Peshawar, deepened.

The dream of Pakistan had arrived—but its early years were marked by mistrust and suppression of dissenting voices.

Conclusion

The accession of NWFP to Pakistan through the 1947 referendum was a landmark event in the region's history. It not only settled the territorial question but also reshaped the province's political landscape for decades to come. However, the contestation around identity, autonomy, and recognition of ethnic plurality continued to simmer. The legacy of this decision—marked by political realignment, suppression of dissent, and strategic centrality—laid the foundation for the challenges and transformations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would face in the post-independence era.

The One Unit System and its Abolition (1955–1970)

*Centralization versus Identity:
Pakhtun Struggle for Provincial Autonomy*

The One Unit Scheme, introduced in 1955 and abolished in 1970, was one of the most significant political experiments in Pakistan's early history. It sought to unify the western wing of the country,—comprising four ethnically distinct provinces and several princely states—into a single administrative entity called *West Pakistan*. Conceived in the name of administrative efficiency and national unity, the scheme ultimately deepened ethnic divisions and suppressed provincial identities, especially in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the One Unit period was a time of identity loss, political marginalization, and simmering resistance—a period that would shape the province's future demands for federalism and autonomy.

Historical Background: The Rationale for One Unit

Following independence in 1947, Pakistan was a geographically bifurcated country—East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan—separated by over 1,000 miles of Indian Territory. East Pakistan had a larger population than all provinces in the West combined.

This imbalance created apprehensions in the western political elite, who feared that East Pakistan's numerical majority would dominate federal politics. To counter this, the central government began discussing a formula that would *equalize representation* between the two wings of the country.

In 1955, under Governor General Iskander Mirza and Prime Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, the *One Unit Plan* was formally introduced through an executive order.

Implementation of the One Unit Plan (1955)

On 14 October 1955, the provinces and princely states of West Pakistan—NWFP, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan (then a Chief Commissioner's province), Bahawalpur, Kalat, and other princely states—were merged into a single province: West Pakistan.

- The capital of West Pakistan was established in Lahore.
- The Provincial Assemblies of the pre-existing units were dissolved.
- A single provincial legislature and bureaucracy were created.

This was done through the Establishment of *West Pakistan Act, 1955*, passed by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

Impact on NWFP

Loss of Provincial Identity:

The most immediate impact on NWFP was the loss of its distinct status. For a province that had only gained its name and legislative powers a few years earlier, this was a major blow.

The unique Pashtun identity, culture, and political voice were subsumed under a larger and Punjabi-dominated provincial structure.

The name NWFP remained as an administrative term only for select federal records; politically, it had ceased to exist.

Marginalization in Bureaucracy and Politics

- Punjabi bureaucrats dominated the new provincial administration.
- NWFP's representatives had limited access to policymaking and budgetary decisions.
- Federal resources were disproportionately allocated to the central and eastern regions of West Pakistan, especially Punjab and Karachi.

Suppression of Political Dissent:

Pashtun nationalist leaders, including Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Abdul Wali Khan, and their political allies, opposed the scheme from the outset. Their dissent was met with:

- Surveillance and arrests
- Political restrictions
- Censorship of nationalist narratives

The central government labeled these leaders as anti-national or pro-Afghan, further isolating their voices.

Resistance and Growing Discontent

Pashtun Nationalism Reignited:

The forced merger of NWFP into West Pakistan revived Pashtun nationalist sentiment, which had been weakened following the 1947 referendum and the suppression of the Khudai Khidmatgars.

- Political parties like National Awami Party (NAP), formed in 1957, became vocal critics of One Unit.
- These movements called for provincial autonomy, recognition of ethnic identities, and the restoration of the historical provinces.

Legal and Constitutional Opposition:

- The 1956 Constitution endorsed the One Unit system by creating a bicameral legislature with equal representation for East and West Pakistan.
- However, critics noted that within West Pakistan, Punjab's dominance remained unchecked, while smaller provinces were voiceless.

Fall of One Unit: The Winds of Change (1969–1970)

By the end of the 1960s, Pakistan was experiencing a political awakening. Several factors combined to challenge the legitimacy of the One Unit system:

Popular Movements and Protests:

- Students, intellectuals, and political activists across NWFP, Sindh, and Baluchistan began demanding restoration of their provincial rights.
- The rise of Abdul Wali Khan as a formidable Pashtun nationalist and federalist voice re-energized opposition.

Weakening of the Central Regime:

- The resignation of President Ayub Khan in 1969 marked a collapse of centralized authoritarian control.
- General Yahya Khan, who replaced Ayub, realized that political stabilization was impossible without addressing ethnic and provincial grievances.

Legal and Constitutional Developments:

- On 30 March 1970, General Yahya Khan promulgated his Legal Framework Order (LFO).

- Through this order, the One Unit was formally dissolved, and the historical provinces were restored, including NWFP.

Restoration of NWFP and Political Rebirth (1970)

Rebirth of Provincial Identity:

The re-emergence of NWFP was more than an administrative reversal; it was the restoration of a wounded identity. The province was granted:

- A provincial assembly
- An elected government
- Control over education, language, culture, and local development

1970 Elections and the Rise of Nationalist Politics:

In the 1970 general elections, the National Awami Party (NAP), in alliance with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), won a majority in NWFP. This marked a decisive shift:

- The people rejected centralized authoritarianism.
- The province voted for a federal, pluralistic Pakistan.

Mufti Mahmood of JUI became the Chief Minister, and the NAP-JUI coalition became a major player in post-One Unit Pakistani politics.

Legacy and Significance

Assertion of Provincial Autonomy:

The experience of One Unit left a deep mistrust of centralized governance in NWFP. Future political discourse in the province

would consistently emphasize autonomy, control over natural resources, and cultural preservation.

Strengthening of Federalism in Pakistan:

The failure of One Unit became a powerful lesson: Pakistan could not be governed through imposed uniformity. Diversity had to be recognized and managed through federalism.

Long-Term Political Awakening:

The One Unit experience gave rise to new political leadership in NWFP—men like Wali Khan, Ajmal Khattak, and Mufti Mehmood—who would shape Pakistan's politics in the decades to come.

Conclusion

The One Unit scheme was an ill-conceived attempt to engineer national unity by erasing ethnic and provincial identities. For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was a period of administrative exile and political suppression. But it was also a time of awakening, which ultimately led to the resurgence of a proud provincial identity and a renewed commitment to federal democracy. The abolition of One Unit in 1970 remains a landmark in the political history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—marking the end of artificial unity and the beginning of genuine diversity within the Pakistani federation.

The Saur Revolution and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (1978–1989)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: From Frontier Province to Frontline State

The events unfolding in Afghanistan between 1978 and 1989—from the Saur Revolution to the Soviet invasion and the subsequent Afghan Jihad—transformed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (then NWFP) from a quiet border province into the *epicenter* of global geopolitical conflict. This decade marked a turning point in the political, social, economic, and security dynamics of the province. The influx of millions of Afghan refugees, the militarization of society, the rise of religious extremism, the influx of foreign funds and arms, and the erosion of traditional tribal structures left indelible imprints that reverberate to this day.

The Saur (April) Revolution: Prelude to the Invasion

On 27 April 1978, the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) staged a bloody coup in Kabul, toppling President Mohammad Daoud Khan and killing him and most of his family. This event, known as the *Saur Revolution*, brought to power a Soviet-aligned Marxist-Leninist regime led first by Nur Muhammad Taraki and later by Hafizullah Amin.

The PDPA, though ideologically driven, lacked legitimacy, popular support, and deep roots in Afghanistan's deeply religious and tribal society. Its radical reforms—especially on land redistribution, women's rights, and secular education—triggered widespread rebellion.

By 1979, the country was in chaos, with rural uprisings against the communist regime threatening to topple it. The Soviet Union, fearing the loss of a key ally and the spread of instability, decided to intervene militarily.

The Soviet Invasion: December 1979

On 24 December 1979, over 100,000 Soviet troops crossed into Afghanistan. They quickly occupied major cities and installed Babrak Karmal, a Soviet loyalist, as president. This marked the beginning of a brutal ten-year war between the Soviet-backed Afghan government and the Mujahideen resistance fighters.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: The Frontline Province

With its 1,640-km border with Afghanistan and deep ethnic, tribal, and religious ties, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa became the primary launchpad for the Afghan resistance. The province's role was multidimensional:

Hosting Afghan Refugees

Largest Refugee Crisis in the Muslim World:

By 1981, the influx of Afghan refugees into NWFP had swelled to unprecedented levels:

- Over 3.5 million refugees eventually crossed into Pakistan.
- Peshawar and other rural districts became sprawling refugee zones.
- *Jalozai, Nasir Bagh, and Kacha Garhi* near Peshawar became among the world's largest refugee camps.

These camps strained the province's infrastructure, education, health, and economy. But they also became recruitment and ideological hubs for Mujahideen factions.

Rise of the Mujahideen and Religious Militancy

The Afghan Jihad and CIA-ISI Collaboration:

- Pakistan's military government under General Zia-ul-Haq became a key partner in the US-led effort to defeat the Soviets.
- Pakistan facilitated the training, funding, and arming of Mujahideen groups.
- The United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries provided billions in covert aid—channeled largely through NWFP.

Mujahideen Command Centers in Peshawar:

- Mujahideen leaders such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Ahmad Shah Massoud operated out of Peshawar.
- The city became a strategic and ideological nerve center of the Afghan resistance.
- Seminaries and religious schools in KP, many funded by Gulf donors, played a key role in the radicalization and militarization of youth.

Social and Cultural Impact on NWFP

Weaponization of Society:

- Kalashnikov culture took root. Small arms, rocket launchers, and explosives became readily available in local markets.
- Peshawar and surrounding districts became flooded with arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and illegal militias.

Erosion of Traditional Values:

- Tribal codes of honor and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms were replaced or overridden by militant ideologies.
- The glorification of jihad changed youth perceptions of religion and heroism.

Increase in Sectarianism:

- The influx of competing Afghan factions and foreign influence intensified sectarian rivalries, especially between Sunni-Deobandi and Shia groups.
- The 1980s saw the emergence of sectarian militias and targeted violence in previously peaceful areas.

Economic and Infrastructural Consequences

Boomtown Effect in Peshawar:

- Peshawar became an international hub for NGOs, journalists, aid agencies, and spies.
- The economy received a *temporary boost* through aid, refugee resettlement funds, and military assistance.
- Local businesses, transporters, and contractors profited from war logistics.

Long-Term Strain:

- The development of public services stagnated as priorities shifted toward security.
- Education and health services were overburdened due to the refugee influx.
- Smuggling and narcotics-trafficking, especially heroin from Afghan poppy fields, corroded the legal economy.

Political Radicalization and the Rise of Islamist Parties

Islamization under Zia-ul-Haq:

- The Afghan Jihad coincided with General Zia's Islamization agenda in Pakistan. Religious parties such as Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) gained significant influence in KP.
- Religious seminaries multiplied, often with funding from Gulf States and ideological linkages with Afghan Mujahideen groups.

Youth Radicalization:

- Thousands of Pakistani and Afghan youths were recruited for the jihad.
- Many of these “*freedom fighters*” later formed the nucleus of groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the 1990s.

Strategic Depth and Foreign Policy Legacy

Pakistan's Strategic Depth Doctrine:

- NWFP was central to Pakistan's policy of establishing “*strategic depth*” in Afghanistan to counter Indian influence.
- This mindset resulted in decades of interference in Afghan affairs and support for friendly regimes, culminating in the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s.

Fallout after Soviet Withdrawal:

- The Soviets withdrew in 1989, but the war's legacy remained.
- The power vacuum in Afghanistan led to civil war among Mujahideen factions.

- Pakistan's continued involvement would lead to blowback in the form of militancy, extremism, and terrorism—often centered in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Lasting Impact on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Security Challenges:

- KP, particularly areas like Peshawar, Khyber, and Dir, became frequent targets of bombings and assassinations.
- The 2000s Taliban insurgency in Swat and tribal areas had its roots in the 1980s militarization.

Social Fragmentation:

- Tribal and ethnic harmony weakened due to the mass refugee influx, arms proliferation, and ideological polarization.
- The province's cultural identity faced challenges from imported extremist interpretations of Islam.

Dependency on International Aid:

- KP became reliant on international assistance, both for refugee management and development, reducing policy independence.

Conclusion

The *Saur Revolution* and the Soviet-Afghan War turned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from a peripheral province into the *nucleus* of a global Cold War conflict. The province paid a high price: while it gained international attention, financial flows, and strategic importance, it also absorbed the brunt of war, displacement, and extremism. The consequences of this era—armed militancy, social disruption, and political radicalization—continue to shape KP's landscape even in the 21st century. This chapter in the

province's history underscores the dangers of prolonged conflict, proxy wars, and the militarization of faith and identity.

The MMA Government in NWFP (2002–2007)

The Rise of Religious Politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The general elections of October 2002 produced one of the most unexpected political outcomes in Pakistan's recent history. In North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)—now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)—a newly formed alliance of religious parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), swept to power with a two-thirds majority. This marked the first time in Pakistan's history that a coalition of Islamic parties ruled a province, and NWFP became the political laboratory for their vision of a Sharia-based governance system. The rise of the MMA must be understood in the broader context of post-9/11 geopolitics, domestic disillusionment with mainstream parties, and a growing religio-political undercurrent in KP.

Genesis of the MMA

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal was a six-party alliance of religious parties with divergent ideologies but a shared commitment to Islamic governance. The key constituents were:

- *Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)* – an Islamist party with a modernist orientation and strong organizational structure.
- *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl)* – JUI-F a Deobandi religious party with roots in the Madrassah network.
- *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Sami)*
- *Jamiat Ahl e Hadith*
- *Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan* (Shia party)
- *Islami Tehrik* (a factional offshoot)

Despite sectarian differences, the MMA united under a common banner of *anti-Americanism*, *anti-secularism*, and demand for the implementation of *Islamic laws*.

The Political Context: Post-9/11 Pakistan

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Pakistan, under General Pervez Musharraf, became a frontline ally of the United States in the Global War on Terror. This deeply polarized public opinion, particularly in NWFP:

- Anti-American sentiment was high due to the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan.
- Drone strikes, civilian casualties, and the influx of Afghan refugees reignited anti-Western feelings.
- The traditional Pashtun sense of honor (*Ghairat*) and tribal hospitality clashed with Pakistan's military cooperation with the U.S.

Amidst this backdrop, the MMA capitalized on rising resentment, promising to protect Islamic identity and resist Westernization.

2002 General Elections: A Landslide Victory

In the October 2002 general elections, the MMA made stunning electoral gains:

- In NWFP, it won 68 out of 99 seats in the provincial assembly.
- In Baluchistan, the MMA formed a coalition government.
- In the National Assembly, it emerged as the third-largest party.

The MMA's victory in NWFP was primarily due to:

- The weak performance of mainstream parties, especially the PPP and PML-N, who had lost credibility.
- General Musharraf's manipulation of the political landscape, which sidelined secular opposition and indirectly benefited religious parties.
- The mobilization of Madrassah networks, mosque pulpits, and religious leaders who urged voters to support "pious" candidates.

Formation of the Government

The MMA selected Akram Khan Durrani, a senior JUI-F leader from Bannu, as the Chief Minister of NWFP. The cabinet included representatives from JI and JUI-F and reflected a strong Deobandi and Salafi influence.

The MMA Agenda and Governance Style

Islamization Measures:

The MMA's core promise was the implementation of *Sharia* in the province. Key steps included:

- *Hisba Bill (2005):* The most controversial legislative attempt to enforce morality. The bill sought to establish an Ombudsman (*Mohtasib*) to monitor social and moral behavior, enforce prayer timings, and prevent vice. It was struck down by the Supreme Court, declaring it unconstitutional.
- *Ban on Music and Cultural Events:* Several music centers, CD shops, and cultural programs were discouraged or closed, especially in rural areas.

- *Segregation in Schools:* The government attempted to implement gender segregation in co-educational institutions and promoted Madrassah education.

Opposition to Women's Rights Initiatives:

- The MMA opposed national legislation that supported women's empowerment, including reforms in the *Hudood Ordinance*.
- They resisted NGO activity, especially those working on gender issues, calling them tools of Western influence.

Education and Curriculum:

- Emphasis was placed on Islamic studies and Arabic in the school curriculum.
- MMA opposed textbook *revisions* that toned down religious content.

Law and Order:

- While the province remained relatively stable compared to the tribal areas, the MMA failed to check the growing influence of Taliban-linked groups, especially in Southern districts and areas bordering FATA.
- Reports emerged of “*unofficial Taliban-style enforcement*” in areas like Tank, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan.

Public Reaction and Criticism

Support Base:

- Many conservative families, traders, and mosque-going citizens initially supported the MMA, seeing it as a cleaner and more principled alternative to the corrupt mainstream parties.

- The MMA administration initiated modest welfare programs, including support for Madrassahs, small loans, and religious institutions.

Disillusionment Sets In:

Over time, however, public dissatisfaction grew:

- The MMA failed to deliver meaningful development or address poverty.
- Unemployment, poor infrastructure, and low investment continued.
- Many accused the religious parties of being hypocritical, enjoying the perks of power without implementing true reform.

MMA's Role in National Politics

- In the National Assembly, the MMA played a dual role—supporting Musharraf's presidency under the Legal Framework Order (LFO) in return for political concessions, while simultaneously opposing his alliance with the US.
- This “*double game*” tarnished the MMA's credibility among more radical and grassroots supporters.

Decline and Electoral Defeat

By the 2008 elections, the MMA had effectively collapsed due to:

- Internal differences, particularly between JUI-F and JI.
- Loss of public trust in their governance.

- Emergence of Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as stronger secular alternatives in KP.

In the 2008 elections, the MMA was routed:

- ANP won a majority and formed the government.
- MMA leaders were confined to a few isolated constituencies.

Legacy of the MMA in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Religious Radicalization:

- The MMA period saw the entrenchment of conservative and hardline Islamic thought in education, administration, and public discourse.
- The moral policing and rhetoric helped normalize intolerance, especially against minorities and women.

Political Islam's Mainstreaming:

- The MMA experience demonstrated that religious parties could win electoral power, not just rely on street agitation.
- However, it also exposed their inability to govern effectively, causing long-term damage to their political credibility.

Fissures between Moderation and Extremism:

- The MMA struggled to distance itself from militant groups, especially in southern KP and tribal areas.
- This ambiguity enabled extremist actors to grow stronger, paving the way for later Taliban infiltration into Swat, Buner, and other districts.

Shaping Future Political Alignments:

- The MMA era helped reinvigorate secular politics in KP, particularly the ANP, which campaigned on an anti-Taliban and pro-Pashtun identity platform in 2008.
- It also led to a rethinking of the role of religion in governance, especially after the violence and militancy of the post-MMA years.

Conclusion

The MMA government in NWFP (2002–2007) marked a pivotal moment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's political evolution. It represented the intersection of religion, geopolitics, and democracy, but ultimately failed to deliver a sustainable model of governance. While it succeeded in giving a voice to Pakistan's religious right, it also highlighted the limitations of using religion as a sole political platform. The MMA's tenure left behind a province more polarized, ideologically rigid, and vulnerable to militancy than before. In retrospect, it stands as both a milestone and a warning in the complex journey of democracy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Terrorism and Military Operations (2004–2010)

Swat, Malakand, and the Struggle to Reclaim the State

Between 2004 and 2010, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) faced an unprecedented wave of terrorism, militancy and insurgency. What had once been a peaceful frontier province was now the epicenter of violence, radicalization, and anti-state militancy. The security crisis reached a climax in the scenic Swat Valley, which was overrun by Taliban militants, leading to a full-scale military operation to reclaim the area. This period witnessed the collapse of civil administration, the emergence of parallel Taliban rule, the displacement of millions, and ultimately, the restoration of state writ through Operation Rah-e-Rast (*The Right Path*).

Backdrop: Rise of the Pakistani Taliban

The seeds of the crisis were sown in the aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan War and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan (2001). Many militants fled across the porous border into Pakistan's tribal areas. In 2004, the Pakistani Taliban—later known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—began to emerge from this vacuum.

- The FATA region, particularly South Waziristan, became a base for the TTP.
- These militants, originally Afghan jihad veterans, morphed into a Pakistani anti-state insurgency.
- By 2006–07, they had expanded their reach into settled districts of KP, especially Swat and Malakand Division.

Swat Valley: Paradise Lost

Swat had long been known for its breathtaking beauty, tourism, and relatively high literacy rate. But it also had deep-rooted but non-violent religious conservatism, which was exploited by the militants.

Maulana Fazlullah and the Emergence of Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM)

- Maulana Fazlullah, a radical cleric and son-in-law of Sufi Muhammadi, began broadcasting extremist sermons via illegal FM radio, earning the nickname "*Mullah Radio*."
- He gained popularity by preaching anti-Western, anti-polio, and anti-government messages.
- The TNSM demanded Sharia rule and rallied support under the guise of Islamic justice.

By 2007, Fazlullah's group had effectively taken control of Swat:

- Police stations and army checkpoints were overrun.
- Girls' schools were bombed.
- Local government officials fled.
- Executions, public floggings, and "*morality policing*" became the norm.

Collapse of Civil Authority and Parallel Taliban Rule

Between 2007 and 2009, the Taliban had established *parallel* courts, tax systems, and armed patrols. The state writ collapsed in much of Swat, Dir, Buner, and Shangla district.

- Militants extended their influence into Buner (just 100 km from Islamabad), sparking alarm nationwide.

- The ANP-led provincial government was overwhelmed, often calling for federal intervention.

The Peace Deal and Its Failure (2009)

In February 2009, under immense pressure, the provincial government signed a peace agreement with the TNSM and Taliban, known as the *Malakand Accord*. Key features included:

- Implementation of Nizam-e-Adl (Islamic Justice System) in Malakand Division.
- Withdrawal of security forces.
- Ceasefire and cessation of hostilities by the militants.

However, the deal emboldened the Taliban, who took it as a sign of victory. They:

- Advanced into Buner and Lower Dir.
- Continued their harsh enforcement of Islamic law.
- Publicly challenged the State's authority.

This prompted national outrage and international condemnation, forcing the state to abandon appeasement.

Operation Rah-e-Rast (May–July 2009)

Faced with the looming threat of Taliban expansion, the Pakistani military launched Operation Rah-e-Rast (“*The Right Path*”) in May 2009.

Key Features of the Operation:

- Conducted by Pakistan Army and paramilitary forces, supported by air strikes.

- Focused on Swat, Buner, and Shangla.
- Involved urban and mountainous combat against well-entrenched militants.

Successes:

- Over 2,000 militants killed or captured.
- Fazlullah's network dismantled; he fled to Afghanistan.
- Swat Valley was retaken and military control was re-established.

Human Cost:

- Over 2 million people were displaced from their homes—Pakistan's largest internal displacement since Partition.
- Major cities like Mardan, Peshawar, and Abbottabad were flooded with refugees.
- The army established IDP camps and launched a civilian assistance program.

Post-Operation Phase: Return, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation

By August 2009, the military declared Swat "cleared." The government began:

- Facilitating return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
- Rebuilding schools, roads, hospitals, and courts.
- Establishing civil-military coordination centers to restore basic governance.

Though normalcy returned, the presence of military checkpoints, curfews, and surveillance persisted for years.

Impact on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Psychological Trauma and Fear:

- Entire generations in Swat and Malakand experienced violence, trauma, and displacement.
- Children were deprived of education; many schools were destroyed.

Transformation of Provincial Politics:

- The Awami National Party (ANP), despite its secular credentials, was seen as weak in responding to the Taliban.
- The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) later capitalized on anti-war, anti-American sentiments and gained popularity.

Increased Militarization:

- Even in peacetime, the province remained under military observation.
- A counter-insurgency framework was developed and expanded into civilian policing.

Role of Media and Public Perception:

- Malala Yousafzai, a schoolgirl from Swat, rose to international fame after being shot by Taliban gunmen in 2012 (post-operation), further highlighting the region's struggle.
- The national and global media brought global attention to KP's resilience and vulnerability.

Challenges in Counter-Extremism

Despite military success, ideological extremism remained embedded:

- Many militants melted away and re-emerged later in different forms.
- The TTP regrouped in FATA and Afghanistan, launching cross-border attacks.
- Rehabilitation and deradicalization programs remained limited in scope.

Lessons Learned

1. Military success alone is insufficient
2. Without long-term political and economic reforms.
2. Appeasement of militants, as seen in the peace deals, can embolden them.
3. The conflict revealed deep institutional weaknesses in policing, justice, and civilian administration.
4. KP requires sustained investment in education, culture, and employment to resist radical ideologies.

Conclusion

The period from 2004 to 2010 was a dark chapter in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The province faced an existential threat from religious extremism, witnessed the collapse of state authority, and endured the horrors of war and displacement. Yet it also stood as a testament to resilience, with its people and institutions slowly reclaiming control. Operation *Rah-e-Rast* was a turning point—not just militarily, but in demonstrating that the state, when committed, could defeat insurgency.

However, the long-term victory lies in winning hearts and minds, and in preventing future generations from falling into the same ideological traps.

Renaming NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2010)

A Province Reclaims Its Name and Rights

For over a century, the name North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) symbolized colonial legacy and administrative abstraction. Created by the British Raj in 1901, the name was geographical and direction-based, offering no recognition to the ethnic, cultural, or historical identity of the people living within its borders—primarily the Pashtuns. After years of political struggle and debate, the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 finally changed the name of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, marking a historic milestone. This name change, coupled with the broader devolution of powers to the provinces, helped redefine Pakistan's federal structure and affirmed the province's unique identity within the federation.

Historical Context: The Problem with "NWFP"

The name North-West Frontier Province was coined by the British purely for *administrative convenience*. It had several limitations:

- It described the province only in terms of its geographic location—northwest of British India's core.
- It did not reflect the Pashtun majority, their language, or their centuries-old tribal identity.
- It symbolized a colonial and militarized outlook, reducing a culturally rich region to a “*frontier*.”

As early as the 1950s, various political parties and Pashtun nationalists, especially Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Abdul Wali Khan, had demanded that the province be renamed in line with

its ethnic and historical identity. However, political resistance—mainly from non-Pashtun minorities within the province and Punjabi and Urdu-speaking segments nationally—prevented this change.

The Demand for "Pakhtunkhwa"

The term Pakhtunkhwa (meaning "Land of the Pashtuns" in Pashto) had been used for decades in poetry, political discourse, and activism.

- Parties like the Awami National Party (ANP) made renaming the province a core ideological goal.
- In the 1990s and early 2000s, the demand gained momentum, particularly with the ANP's electoral success in KP and the growing Pashtun cultural revival.
- However, this proposal was opposed by ethnic Hindko-speaking communities, particularly in Hazara Division, who feared the name would marginalize non-Pashtun minorities.

To address these sensitivities, the name "*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*" was proposed as a compromise:

- "*Khyber*", referencing the famous Khyber Pass, carried historical significance and was more inclusive.
- It symbolized the region's geostrategic importance and was already recognized globally.
- The combination was meant to balance ethnic identity with geographic symbolism.

The 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010): A Turning Point

The name change came as part of the broader 18th Constitutional Amendment passed by the National Assembly on April 8, 2010, and signed into law by President Asif Ali Zardari on April 19, 2010.

Key Provisions of the 18th Amendment:

1. Renaming NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
2. Repeal of Article 58(2)(b) – which gave the President the power to dissolve the National Assembly.
3. Devolution of 17 federal ministries (including education, health, and culture) to the provinces.
4. Recognition of provincial autonomy as the foundation of a true federal system.

The amendment was passed unanimously by the parliamentary committee, which included representatives from all major political parties, showcasing a rare moment of national consensus.

Political Reactions to the Name Change

Support from Pashtun Nationalists:

- The ANP, under Asfandyar Wali Khan, celebrated the change as the fulfillment of Bacha Khan's dream.
- Pashtun intellectuals, poets, and writers hailed the renaming as a moment of cultural pride.

Opposition from Hazara Division:

- In the Hazara region, dominated by Hindko-speaking and Gojri-speaking communities, the name change triggered violent protests.

- The Hazara Qaumi Mahaz (HQM), led by Babar Nawaz Khan and others, called for:
 - Reversal of the name change.
 - Declaration of Hazara as a separate province
- On April 12, 2010, a massive protest in Abbottabad turned violent, leading to the deaths of at least 7 protestors in police firing—an incident still remembered as the Hazara Killings.

Response by the Government:

- The government attempted to pacify the situation by promising development projects for Hazara.
- But the demand for Hazara province became a recurring political slogan, particularly for PML-N candidates in the region.

Cultural and Symbolic Significance:

The renaming of the province was more than a political act—it was a symbolic affirmation of Pashtun identity within the framework of the Pakistani federation.

- It gave emotional closure to a long struggle against colonial erasure.
- It strengthened the cultural renaissance in the province: greater use of Pashto in media, Pashto literature, and cultural festivals.
- It created a model for ethnic recognition within a federal structure—encouraging other groups (e.g., Seraikis, Hazaras) to pursue similar identity-based demands.

Impact of the 18th Amendment on Governance in KP

Beyond the symbolic renaming, the 18th Amendment had tangible effects on the province's administrative autonomy:

Control over Key Sectors:

- KP gained legislative and executive control over education, health, social welfare, women's development, culture, and local government.
- The KP Assembly now had the power to draft laws tailored to local needs, without federal interference.

Revenue and Resource Sharing:

- Although the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award (2009) preceded the amendment, the 18th Amendment reinforced provincial rights to natural resources.
- KP, rich in hydel power and minerals, gained a larger share of national revenue.

Institutional Restructuring:

- Ministries were reorganized to manage the devolved subjects.
- KP had to build capacity, especially in bureaucracy and service delivery, to absorb new responsibilities.

Strengthening Provincial Identity:

- New provincial logos, curricula, cultural bodies, and Pashto language promotion efforts were initiated.
- The province began *rebranding* itself internationally as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in trade, tourism, and diplomatic platforms.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the successes, some problems persisted:

- Inter-provincial coordination became difficult with divergent laws across provinces.
- Federal ministries, though abolished constitutionally, continued to interfere in devolved domains through attached departments.
- There was resistance from bureaucracy unused to provincial control.
- Fiscal autonomy remained limited due to central control over some taxes and borrowing powers.

Legacy and Long-Term Significance

A Milestone in Federalism:

- The 18th Amendment restored the true spirit of federalism as envisioned in the 1973 Constitution.
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa emerged as a proactive, autonomous unit of the federation, able to legislate, administer, and govern its own affairs.

Revival of Regional Confidence:

- Pashtuns in KP experienced a sense of ownership and recognition.
- It helped counter the feeling of exclusion and marginalization, especially in the wake of militancy and war.

Precedent for Identity Politics:

- Other regions—South Punjab, Hazara, Gilgit-Baltistan—were encouraged to pursue identity-based demands within constitutional frameworks.

Conclusion

The renaming of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was not merely a matter of nomenclature; it was the culmination of a century-long struggle for recognition, identity, and autonomy. Coupled with the 18th Constitutional Amendment, it marked a transformative moment in the evolution of Pakistan's federal system. Despite challenges and controversies—particularly the unrest in Hazara—the decision affirmed that Pakistan's strength lies in embracing its ethnic diversity, not suppressing it. For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was a *homecoming of identity, a rediscovery of voice, and a milestone on the road to self-determined progress.

The Rise of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in KP (2013–2018)

A New Political Experiment in the Frontier Province

The general elections of May 11, 2013 marked a political earthquake in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For the first time in its history, the province handed a *decisive mandate* to a new, uncontested political party—Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan. Riding a wave of popular disillusionment with traditional parties, PTI promised change, transparency, good governance, and justice under the banner of its slogan, "*Naya Pakistan*." The people of KP, exhausted from decades of conflict, corruption, and broken promises, embraced PTI as an agent of reform. This chapter explores the factors behind PTI's rise, the key reforms and policies of its government, and the long-term implications for provincial and national politics.

Background: Political Volatility and Public Disillusionment

The years leading up to the 2013 elections were tumultuous for KP:

The ANP-PPP coalition government (2008–2013) had faced:

- A brutal Taliban insurgency, especially in Swat, Dir, and Malakand.
- The assassination of several ANP leaders, including senior provincial minister Bashir Ahmad Bilour.
- Massive internal displacement, security lockdowns, and economic stagnation.

Despite efforts to restore peace, there was growing public frustration over:

- Corruption, inefficiency, and poor service delivery.
- The perception that traditional parties had failed to reform the state.

Against this backdrop, Imran Khan's PTI positioned itself as a clean, honest, and anti-status quo alternative.

PTI's Election Campaign in KP

PTI's KP campaign was focused on:

- Promises of accountability, justice, and an end to VIP culture.
- Emphasis on youth engagement, with Imran Khan attracting huge rallies in Peshawar, Mardan, and Swabi.
- Criticism of both secular-nationalist parties (ANP, PPP) and religious parties (JI, JUI-F) for their past governance failures.
- Strong support from the urban middle class, students, professionals, and the educated youth.

Election Results (KP Assembly - 2013):

- PTI: 66 seats (out of 124)
- JUI-F: 15
- PML-N: 13
- ANP: 5
- PPP: 4
- Jamaat-e-Islami: 7 (entered alliance with PTI)
- Independents: 14

PTI formed a government with the support of Jamaat-e-Islami, some independents, and smaller parties. Pervez Khattak, a seasoned politician from Nowshera, was chosen as Chief Minister.

Key Reforms of the PTI Government (2013–2018)

PTI claimed its KP government to be a model for the rest of the country, promising reforms in governance, transparency, education, policing, and public service delivery.

Police Reform: Depoliticizing Law Enforcement:

One of PTI's most celebrated achievements in KP was reforming the police.

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Act 2017 replaced colonial-era policing structures.
- The Inspector General of Police (IGP) was given operational independence.
- Political interference in postings, transfers, and operations was curtailed.
- Special Units such as Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) and Rapid Response Forces (RRF) were created.

Education Reform:

- Over 14,000 teachers recruited through NTS-based merit system. Introduction of a uniform curriculum and improved textbooks.
- Massive school infrastructure rehabilitation program across the province.
- Focus on teacher training, monitoring, and attendance enforcement through mobile apps.

Health Sector Improvements:

- Launch of the Sehat Sahulat Card, a health insurance program providing free treatment in public and private hospitals.
- Reforms in the Basic Health Units (BHUs) and District Headquarter Hospitals (DHQs).
- Recruitment of doctors on merit; improved medicine supply chains.

Local Government Empowerment:

In 2015, KP held local government elections, creating a three-tiered system:

- District, Tehsil (sub district), and Village/Neighborhood Councils.
- Funds were decentralized to the grassroots level.

E-Governance and Anti-Corruption:

- Introduction of Right to Information Act, Right to Services Act, and Conflict of Interest Law.
- Establishment of Citizen Facilitation Centers, mobile governance units, and online complaint portals.
- Revamping the Ehtesab Commission (though it later faced internal conflicts and was suspended).

Public Reception and Criticism

What Worked?

- The PTI government received praise from independent observers for:
 - Police reforms
 - Education infrastructure
 - Health insurance

- Digitization of services

What Didn't Work?

- Some initiatives, such as the Ehtesab Commission, failed due to bureaucratic and political resistance.
- Development disparities between urban and rural districts persisted.
- PTI was accused of neglecting Hazara and southern KP in resource allocation.
- Some projects, like the Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), faced delays, corruption allegations, and budget overruns (though it was completed in 2020).

Political Consequences and Legacy

National Breakthrough for PTI:

- The KP performance played a key role in PTI's 2018 general election victory at the federal level.
- Khan showcased KP as a “*model of change*”, which resonated with voters in Punjab and beyond.

Collapse of Traditional Parties:

- ANP, PPP, and JUI-F were further marginalized in KP.
- PTI became the dominant political force in the province.

Shaping Public Expectations:

- Voters now expected performance and transparency, not just slogans.
- PTI's governance reset the terms of political competition in KP.

Conclusion

The 2013–2018 PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a watershed moment in the province's political evolution. For the first time, a non-ethnic, non-religious, reform-oriented party governed with a majority and attempted structural reforms in policing, education, health, and governance. While not without faults, the PTI administration created a new template for governance and helped break the monopoly of dynastic and sectarian politics in the province. More importantly, it redefined political expectations, especially among the youth, and laid the foundation for PTI's rise to power at the national level in 2018.

The FATA–Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Merger (2018–2020)

*Integrating the Frontier: A New Chapter in the History of
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

The merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2018 marked the end of over a century of colonial governance in Pakistan's northwest. Long governed under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR)—a draconian legal code imposed by the British—the tribal areas had been kept politically and economically marginalized since the formation of Pakistan. The 25th Constitutional Amendment, passed in May 2018, brought FATA into the mainstream by integrating it into KP, granting its residents constitutional rights, democratic representation, and access to formal justice. It was a monumental step, but not without serious administrative, political, and socio-economic challenges.

Historical Background: FATA's Isolation

FATA was created during British rule as a *buffer zone* between British India and Afghanistan. It was administered indirectly through:

- Political agents instead of elected officials
- FCR (1901), which denied the population access to formal courts, individual rights, or political participation.
- Collective punishment, arbitrary detention, and lack of legal safeguards were hallmarks of the system.

Post-independence, FATA remained:

- Under federal control via the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON).

- Excluded from provincial jurisdiction, even though it bordered KP.
- Politically neglected, with minimal state investment in education, health, and infrastructure.

The lack of governance created fertile ground for:

- Militancy, especially post-9/11.
- The rise of Taliban factions, including Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).
- Military operations from 2004 to 2017, including Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad.

The Path to Merger: Why Now?

The call to merge FATA into KP had been made for decades, especially by:

- Civil society, youth activists, and legal experts.
- Political parties like PTI, ANP, JI, and PPP.
- FATA-based reform movements, such as the FATA Youth Jirga.

However, it was the military operations against the TTP, combined with:

- The displacement of over 3 million people,
- The demand for constitutional rights,
- And the political vacuum left by de-radicalization efforts, that created the urgency and opportunity to push for mainstreaming FATA.

The 25th Constitutional Amendment (May 2018)

Key Provisions:

- FATA was merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, abolishing its separate status.
- Articles 1, 51, 59, 106, 155, and others were amended.
- The FCR was repealed and replaced by the Rewaj Act (temporarily), and later KP's judicial and administrative system was extended to tribal districts.

FATA would now:

- Elect representatives to the National and KP Provincial Assembly.
- Be governed under the KP local government system.
- Receive a 3% share of the NFC Award (Rs. 100 billion annually for 10 years) for reconstruction and development.

The amendment was passed with overwhelming support in both the National Assembly and Senate, although JUI-F and PkMAP opposed it.

Political Implications and Elections

2019 Provincial Elections in Merged Districts:

For the first time in history, the people of former FATA voted for their own representatives in the KP Assembly.

- 16 seats were contested.
- Turnout: Moderate (~30%) despite logistical challenges.
- PTI won 5 seats, Independents 6, JUI-F 3, and ANP and Jamaat-e-Islami 1 each.

This brought the tribal districts fully under the provincial political framework, breaking a legacy of political exclusion.

Security and Administrative Transition

The merger presented massive challenges in security, governance, and development:

Security:

- Militancy in tribal districts was largely suppressed by 2017–18, but sporadic attacks and target killings continued.
- Local Levies and Khasadar forces were merged into the KP Police, a move that faced resistance but was crucial for unified law enforcement.

Justice System:

- Extension of judicial courts, district administration, and revenue systems.
- Training and deployment of judges, magistrates, and civil servants in the newly merged areas.
- Creation of police stations, jails, and forensic systems to replace the Political Agent-led system.

Development and Reconstruction

The government pledged:

- Rs. 1 trillion over 10 years for reconstruction and social services.
- Focus on:
 - Education and school construction
 - Health infrastructure Road networks (e.g., FATA Expressway)
 - Agricultural support and microfinance

However, progress has been *uneven* due to:

- Delays in fund disbursement
- Bureaucratic capacity gaps
- Corruption concerns
- Resistance from some tribal elites, who benefitted from the old system

Challenges and Resistance

Identity and Representation:

- Some tribal elders and nationalist voices argued that FATA deserved a separate province, not a merger.
- Concerns about Pashtun nationalism, centralization, and loss of tribal traditions.

Legal Complexity:

- Sudden abolition of the FCR left a legal vacuum, as courts and police were not yet fully operational.
- Jirga system, a traditional dispute resolution mechanism, continues unofficially, creating dual systems of justice.

Socioeconomic Grievances:

- High expectations of rapid development clashed with slow bureaucratic roll-out.
- Youth frustration over unemployment and lack of infrastructure remains high.
- Trust deficit with state institutions continues due to past marginalization.

Positive Outcomes and Progress

Despite the challenges, the merger has yielded tangible progress:

- *Constitutional rights extended:* Access to courts, voting, education, and political representation.
- *Integration of services:* Tribal residents can now get ID cards, passports, and police FIRs like any Pakistani citizen.
- *Improved law enforcement:* Unified policing has begun stabilizing formerly lawless areas.
- *Youth mobilization:* Tribal youth increasingly engaged in politics, civil society, and education.

Impact on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- KP's population increased by over 5 million, changing the demographic and electoral balance.
- Political parties now have to campaign and deliver in tribal districts, expanding their provincial base.
- The merger increased KP's security burden but also its strategic importance.
- Provincial planning, budgeting, and administration had to scale up to incorporate new districts.

Conclusion

The FATA–KP merger was one of the most ambitious and far-reaching reforms in Pakistan's post-1947 history. It ended more than a century of legal apartheid and political exclusion in the tribal belt, bringing millions into the mainstream of the Pakistani state. Though implementation has been slow, contested, and imperfect, the merger represents a bold step

towards national unity, federal equality, and democratic inclusion.

For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it meant a bigger, more diverse province—with greater responsibility but also greater potential. Whether this historic merger succeeds in healing old wounds and building a peaceful future will depend on sustained investment, good governance, and meaningful engagement with local communities.

From NWFP to KP: A Tale Spanning Centuries (1849-2020)

The story of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — from its inception as the North-West Frontier Province in 1901 to its modern identity — is one of resilience, identity, and transformation. This concluding chapter aims to provide a panoramic summary of the political, cultural, and administrative journey that the region undertook over the span of more than a century.

The Road to NWFP: Realities and Colonial Strategy (1849-1900)

The roots of the North-West Frontier Province trace back to the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849, which brought the strategically volatile frontier regions under colonial rule. Over the following decades, the British encountered persistent resistance from fiercely independent Pashtun tribes inhabiting the borderlands.

To counter Russian advances in Central Asia and maintain control over this sensitive region, the British adopted a combination of military expeditions, administrative restructuring, and indirect rule through tribal agencies. However, the Punjab government struggled to manage the unique tribal dynamics and security challenges of the frontier. This led to increasing demands for a separate administrative arrangement.

By the close of the 19th century, it became evident that the governance needs of the frontier were fundamentally different from the settled areas of Punjab. Consequently, in 1901, the

British government carved out the North-West Frontier Province from Punjab, giving it a distinct identity under a Chief Commissioner—marking the formal beginning of NWFP's political and administrative journey.

Colonial Genesis (1901–1947)

The creation of NWFP by the British in 1901 was not merely an administrative measure; it was a strategic move designed to manage a sensitive frontier zone. The province, carved out of Punjab, became a buffer between British India and Afghanistan, governed largely through indirect rule and tribal management. While the British sought to control the area for imperial security, the people of NWFP fostered deep undercurrents of resistance and national consciousness.

Peshawar, the provincial capital, emerged as a bastion of anti-colonial struggle, giving birth to leaders such as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and hosting vibrant movements like Khilafat, Congress, and later Khudai Khidmatgar. Despite British efforts to keep the region politically subdued, NWFP's active role in the independence movement laid the foundation of its future political character.

Accession and Ambiguity (1947–1955)

The 1947 referendum, held under complex and contested circumstances, resulted in NWFP's accession to Pakistan. However, the aftermath was not seamless. The division within the local leadership, the marginalization of dissenting voices, and the imposition of central control reflected a turbulent entry into the new state. The early years of Pakistan saw NWFP struggling to define its place within a centralized federation,

often at odds with the dominance of Punjab and the civil-military establishment.

Despite this, the province continued to play a vital role in the democratic evolution of Pakistan, with leaders such as Abdul Qayyum Khan, Sardar Bahadur Khan, and others shaping both provincial and national politics.

One Unit and Identity Crisis (1955–1970)

The imposition of the One Unit scheme in 1955 dissolved NWFP as a province and merged it into a singular entity called West Pakistan. This was a blow to the province's distinct identity and autonomy. Resistance to this scheme remained widespread, and the experiment ultimately collapsed. When the provinces were restored in 1970, NWFP regained its formal status but faced new challenges of representation, development, and recognition within the broader framework of Pakistan.

Islamization, Jihad, and Geopolitics (1979–2001)

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 dramatically altered the fate of NWFP. The province became a frontline state in the international jihad supported by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan's own security apparatus. Millions of Afghan refugees poured in, foreign funding flowed unchecked, and madrassas and militant networks proliferated. The social fabric of the region changed irreversibly.

While NWFP remained loyal to the federation, its people bore the brunt of international politics. Militancy, arms culture, and drug trafficking became endemic, creating long-lasting socio-political challenges.

From Militancy to Mainstream (2001–2010)

After 9/11, NWFP once again found itself on the frontline — this time of the global *"War on Terror."* Swat, Waziristan, Bajaur, and other tribal areas witnessed military operations, mass displacements, and humanitarian crises. Yet, alongside the conflict emerged a renewed desire for governance reform, representation, and peace.

It was in this context that the demand for renaming the province gained momentum. The name *"NWFP,"* a colonial leftover, was seen as a denial of the ethnic and historical identity of the Pakhtuns.

Renaming and Rebirth (2010)

In 2010, through the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the long-standing demand was finally fulfilled. NWFP was officially renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a name that honored the Pakhtun identity and included a reference to the historic Khyber Pass — the gateway of invasions, culture, and commerce. This symbolic act was more than a name change; it was a reaffirmation of history, language, and pride.

Institutional Reforms and Emerging Aspirations (2010–2020)

The renaming came alongside broader devolution reforms under the 18th Amendment. KP gained greater control over its resources, administration, and legislation. While governance challenges persisted — including corruption, lack of infrastructure, and periodic militancy — the province showed promising signs of progress.

Education, health, and police reforms were initiated. Peshawar emerged as a growing urban center, while the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with KP in 2018 brought hopes of greater integration and justice for the historically marginalized tribal belt.

The democratic participation of the people, especially youth and women, increased steadily. KP began to reclaim its space not just as a periphery but as a central player in Pakistan's political and cultural narrative.

Conclusion: A Province Reimagined

From NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the province has walked a long and testing path — from colonial frontier to constitutional province, from battleground of empires to a stakeholder in Pakistan's democratic project. Its people have endured wars, resisted occupation, championed freedom, and demanded recognition.

This transformation has been driven by the unyielding spirit of the Pakhtuns — proud, poetic, political, and principled. The journey of this land is not merely a provincial history; it is a vital chapter in the making of Pakistan itself. As Khyber Pakhtunkhwa steps into the future, it carries the weight of its past with dignity, and the promise of its destiny with determination.

Sohail Anjum

+92-334-9249637 pishoree@gmail.com